

Formal linguistics as a helping tool in adult L2 acquisition

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This work falls within the field of pedagogical linguistics, i.e. the use of tools from formal linguistics in L2 classroom practice (Trotzke & Kupisch 2020, Sheehan et al. 2024). Indeed, the recently growing interest in this field derives from the belief that a higher metalinguistic awareness might help learners in L2 acquisition (Trotzke 2023), and this is especially true for adult learners who tend to formulate hypotheses on L2 based on the metalinguistic knowledge they have already established for L1.

In particular, this work concentrates on L1 Italian university students of the Faculty of Foreign Languages who learn English as an L2. Although English is taught since primary school in Italy, there are some aspects of English morphosyntax which prove particularly hard to acquire (Di Domenico & Bennati 2009), and where also intermediate-to-advanced students still make frequent mistakes. Among them we have highlighted the following three topics:

- the distribution and interpretation of subject pronouns
- the use and omission of articles
- the syntax of 's genitive constructions.

The aim of this project is to work on these three areas, which are not systematically addressed in school and remain problematic also at university level for Italian L1 learners of English. We intend to verify whether explicit, form-focused instructions can improve target-like performance, and, if so, how stable such gains prove over time.

All participants to each training completed a pre-test; participants in the experimental (EXP) condition, then, received explicit grammatical explanation and guided practice, followed by an immediate post-test. A follow-up test was administered to both EXP and non-instructed (NEXP) participants five weeks later. Three untimed elicitation tasks were used, each with two counterbalanced item orders:

Pronouns. A forced-choice completion task targeting the interpretation of overt subject pronouns, adapted from Contemori et al. (2019): 12 experimental items, 13 fillers, 2 trials. Participants: 40 EXP and 11 NEXP.

Articles. A double-gap multiple-choice task jointly probing article morphology and comprehension of sentence meaning; 20 experimental items, 21 fillers, 2 trials. Participants: 38 EXP and 12 NEXP.

's-genitive. A picture-based production task eliciting possessive constructions, including two items targeting elliptical possessives (e.g., *a dog of Emma's*); 12 experimental items, 13 fillers, 2 trials. Participants: 44 EXP and 11 NEXP.

This big amount of data is presently still under analysis. However, preliminary results (relating to a percentage of all data collected) show that, across all three domains, explicit instruction produced measurable gains, though with differing stability.

For **pronoun** interpretation, EXP participants' target-like (subject-antecedent) readings of overt pronouns rose from 50% to 100% at B1 level and from 56% to 73% at B2 level after instruction, remaining high at follow-up (96% and 81% respectively); NEXP participants showed no comparable change (58%→56% at B1; already near ceiling at B2, 96%→98%).

For **articles**, EXP accuracy rose from 72% (pre-test) to 76% (post-test) and 78% (follow-up); the untreated group showed no meaningful change (62%→64%).

For **'s-genitive** constructions, EXP target production rose sharply from 8% to 50% after instruction but declined to 21% at follow-up; the NEXP group remained stable at 25% throughout.

The three areas examined appear to be particularly challenging for Italian L1 learners of English. Encouraging signs of improvement emerged in all three domains explored, though the data are still too limited to draw definitive conclusions. However, these findings suggest that explicit, metalinguistically-oriented instruction can meaningfully improve L2 performance in areas that remain persistently difficult even at rather advanced proficiency levels.

We discuss the implications of these findings for decisions about which linguistic concepts to prioritize in the L2 classroom, at what level of explicitness, and how findings from L2 acquisition research can be translated into concrete, replicable classroom activities and teacher training.

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The Role of Explicit Metalinguistic Knowledge in Learning Difficult L2 Grammar

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Explicit instruction and explicit knowledge have long been central to debates about the role of form-focused instruction in instructed second-language acquisition (SLA). Meta-analyses have generally shown advantages for explicit over implicit instruction (Norris & Ortega, 2000; Spada & Tomita, 2010), but the mechanisms underlying these benefits remain debated. One possibility is that explicit instruction provides learners with declarative, metalinguistic knowledge that can be consciously accessed to analyse and monitor L2 forms, particularly when target structures are complex or do not map straightforwardly onto the L1. This may be especially relevant for adult learners. Within the Declarative/Procedural Model, Ullman (2001, 2004) proposes that L2 grammatical knowledge may rely more heavily on declarative memory than native-language grammar, particularly at lower proficiency levels, when proceduralised representations are less established. Explicit knowledge may thus provide learners with a resource for processing difficult L2 structures, potentially supporting the development of more proceduralised knowledge through practice (DeKeyser, 2015; Suzuki & DeKeyser, 2017).

The present study investigates the role of explicit metalinguistic knowledge in the acquisition of difficult L2 morphosyntactic structures by French learners of English. Specifically, we ask: (1) Does explicit metalinguistic training support learners' ability to detect grammatical violations? and (2) Does such training affect not only grammatical performance, but also learners' metacognitive awareness of their grammatical knowledge?

We focus on English tense-aspect morphology, a domain in which French learners must acquire form–function mappings that differ from those of their L1. In particular, English HAVE is followed by a past participle, a morphosyntactic pattern that partially resembles the French compound tense formed with *AVOIR* or *ÊTRE* and a past participle. By contrast, DO in English is followed by the base form of the verb and functions as a supporting auxiliary carrying tense marking, a structure with no direct equivalent in French. We therefore compared the processing of HAVE and DO auxiliaries in past-tense and past-perfect polar questions.

Thirty-two B1-B2 French learners of English completed a timed written grammaticality judgment task (GJT) at pre-and post-test. Half of the sentences were ungrammatical because the main verb form was incorrect (e.g., **Did Mary finished her dinner?*). Between tests, participants completed three training sessions. The explicit group received metalinguistic explanations of the grammatical rules governing the target forms, whereas the implicit group was exposed to grammatical examples. Both groups then completed targeted practice. At post-test, participants additionally provided confidence ratings and attributed their responses to guessing, intuition, or knowledge of a rule.

Participants showed an asymmetry in their sensitivity to grammatical violations: ungrammatical sentences involving the L2-specific DO structure were more difficult to detect than those involving HAVE (Auxiliary $\times$ Grammaticality interaction, $p = .033$). Crucially, a Session $\times$ Training Group $\times$ Grammaticality interaction ($p = .009$) indicated that only participants who received explicit metalinguistic training improved in their detection of grammatical violations. Explicit training also affected learners' metacognitive access to their grammatical knowledge. Confidence was more closely related to performance in the explicit group, suggesting greater metacognitive calibration. Moreover, the explicitly trained group performed above chance whenever they reported that they

were not guessing, including when they attributed their responses to intuition, whereas the implicitly trained group performed above chance only when they reported relying on knowledge of a rule. This shows that the explicitly trained group achieved better metacognition, but also more “intuition-based” (i.e., more implicit) knowledge than the implicitly trained group.

Taken together, the findings suggest that explicit metalinguistic instruction can contribute not only to the development of declarative grammatical knowledge, but also to learners' awareness of when and how that knowledge can be used. Explicit training supported the detection of violations involving an L2-specific structure that was initially particularly difficult, whereas exposure to grammatical examples alone did not produce comparable gains. Explicit metalinguistic knowledge may therefore serve as a valuable resource for adult L2 learners when acquiring difficult grammatical structures, providing a declarative representation that can support performance before, or alongside, the development of more proceduralised knowledge. These findings suggest that metalinguistic explanations may be particularly useful in the classroom when target structures involve complex form–function mappings that are difficult to infer from exposure or transfer from the L1.

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Code-Switching as a Tool for English L2 Vocabulary Acquisition Across Proficiency Levels

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Starting from the concept of Translanguaging in García (2009), a new line of research has emerged in the field of language teaching that aims to promote pluralistic approaches: language mixing should be encouraged rather than stigmatized, as it represents a useful resource for skill development in bilingual contexts (Wigdorowitz et al. 2026).

The aim of this work is to define an experimental protocol based on the use of Code-Switching (CS) in a language classroom as a teaching tool for L2 learning, focusing in particular on how its effectiveness varies with learners' age and proficiency level. We pose the following research questions:

- (i) Does the use of code-switched material bring advantages in the acquisition of L2 lexicon?
- (ii) Are there differences according to the linguistic level and age of the learners, and, if so, at which stage of L2 acquisition is CS most beneficial?

In this study, we limit our investigation to vocabulary acquisition by Italian learners of English as an L2 through the use of mixed input based on the insertion CS type (Muysken 2000).

The empirical basis of the study initially consisted of 70 Italian middle school students (level A2) and 38 Italian university students (level B1/B2).

Both groups underwent training activities in which vocabulary acquisition was based on mixed-language short stories associated with AI-generated images. Each story contained 10 target words, selected on the basis of lexical placement tests the students had previously taken; the same test was then re-administered after training as a post-test.

The data show a significant increase in post-test scores among middle school students, confirming that code-switched input is effective for L2 vocabulary acquisition at this stage. University students showed a comparatively smaller gain, a difference attributable to their higher starting L2 level, which left less room for improvement in the original task.

For this reason, we designed a follow-up study to directly test this hypothesis: we administered a more difficult training protocol to an additional cohort of 95 university students. Preliminary results (data collection and analysis are still ongoing) point in the same direction, suggesting that CS effectiveness may extend to more advanced learners once input difficulty is calibrated accordingly. The data therefore confirm not only the effectiveness of CS in teaching, but also that its use is particularly beneficial in the early stages of L2 acquisition.

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A pilot intervention study in evaluating the effectiveness of two innovative gamified trainings of phonological working memory: the case of Dutch

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Phonological working memory (PWM) is widely considered a key cognitive mechanism underlying second language acquisition (SLA) (Cheung, 1996; Masoura & Gathercole, 1999, 2005; Hu, 2003; Speciale et al., 2004; O'Brien et al., 2006; French & O'Brien, 2008; Hummel & French, 2016; Vulchanova et al., 2014), yet intervention studies examining whether strengthening PWM facilitates (second) language learning remain scarce. To the best of the authors' knowledge, only three studies have investigated the contribution of PWM training to language-related skills or language proficiency (Maridaki-Kassotaki, 2002; Kim et al., 2019; Karousou & Nerantzaki, 2020), among which the latter two focused on child bilingual/SLA. The current research therefore mainly aims to contribute to this line of research by providing novel insights into the role of PWM in child SLA. In particular, a pilot study with children acquiring Dutch as their second language (L2) was conducted, in which two gamified, touchscreen-based training activities specifically designed to strengthen PWM in Dutch, as recently developed by the authors, were employed as intervention instruments. In addition to evaluating contribution of these innovative PWM training activities to the child's Dutch development as an L2, the current study moreover aims to provide further evidence supporting the positive influence of PWM in child SLA and to offer meaningful insights into the model of PWM, theoretical accounts of SLA and the design of future language intervention programs or activities.

To achieve these research objectives, a double-blind, three-wave (i.e., pretest-midtest-posttest) intervention study covering a period of ten weeks was conducted with 49 young L2 learners of Dutch (aged between 52 and 125 months at the pretest; $M = 79.51$, $SD = 17.499$; 26 girls). After written informed consent had been obtained from their caregivers, the children were randomly assigned to an experimental group ($n = 25$) or a control group ($n = 24$). The experimental group received direct PWM training through the two gamified, touchscreen-based activities using spoken Dutch nonwords as the training stimuli. The control group received the same training activities; however, instead of spoken Dutch nonwords, non-speech (human) sounds were used as the training stimuli. As such, the control group in fact received domain-general, non-verbal auditory working memory (WM) training rather than domain-specific PWM training. This allowed examination of to what extent any increase or development in the L2 proficiency could be solely attributed to the domain-specific PWM training, shedding light on the ongoing discussion regarding the roles of domain-specific and domain-general cognitive mechanisms in child SLA.

Training for both the experimental and the control group was administered individually outside the school setting, typically at home, under the supervision of the caregiver, who received instructions to engage their child in the assigned activities four to five times per week, with each session lasting two to five minutes, throughout the intervention period. A home-based format was adopted in this pilot study to minimize disruption to regular school routines and to avoid placing additional demands on teachers. In principle, however, the gamified, touchscreen-based PWM training activities could also be implemented in classroom settings.

Dutch language proficiency at the pre-, mid-, and posttest (with an average interval of five weeks) was assessed using three components of the Dutch version of the Language Impairment Testing in Multilingual Settings (LITMUS-NL) (Blom et al., 2023), a standardized assessment battery developed by Utrecht University to evaluate language abilities in multilingual children. Specifically, the vocabulary test for nouns (32 items), the vocabulary test for verbs (32 items), and the sentence repetition task (16 items) were selected. To measure changes in the children's PWM, a fourth component of the LITMUS-NL was also administered at the three assessment points: the quasi-

universal nonword repetition task, consisting of 16 nonwords varying in syllabic complexity. In addition to these measures, a caregiver questionnaire was used to collect information about the child's overall development, language profile, and the family's socioeconomic status (SES). This information allowed examination of possible confounding factors in the intervention study, as well as the role of other theoretically relevant factors in child SLA, such as language input and SES (e.g. Paradis 2019).

To obtain an overall measure of the L2 proficiency, a language index was computed based on the standardized scores representing the child's performance on the three language-related subtests of the LITMUS-NL at each assessment point. To examine the role of Dutch language exposure and experience, an exposure/experience index was also computed by combining caregivers' responses to the relevant questions in the questionnaire. The same procedure was applied to construct an SES index to investigate the contribution of the child's socioeconomic background to his/her L2 development.

To explore the role of the child's PWM in his/her L2 development in Dutch, a correlation analysis was first conducted on the pretest scores of the four subcomponents as well as the language index. The results indicated significant positive correlations between the child's PWM, on the one hand, and all four language-related measures and the language index, on the other. These findings provide further evidence for the previously reported relationship in an underexplored L2 context: the stronger the child's PWM capacity, the higher his/her Dutch language proficiency.

To evaluate the unique contribution of the gamified PWM training to possible increases in L2 proficiency, linear mixed-effects models (LMMs) with repeated measures were fitted, using the different language-related measures and the computed language index as the dependent variable in separate analyses. Fixed effects included assessment moment (pretest, midtest, and posttest), group (experimental and control), and their interaction. A random intercept for child was included, while the exposure/experience index and the SES index were entered as covariates.

The results revealed a significant main effect of assessment moment in all fitted models, whereas neither the main effect of group nor the interaction between assessment moment and group reached statistical significance. These findings indicate significant improvements in L2 proficiency over time in both groups, suggesting little unique contribution of the domain-specific PWM training beyond that of the domain-general WM training in the present pilot study. In the presentation, this finding will be further discussed from both a theoretical perspective, in relation to Baddeley's (2003) model of the phonological loop in child L2 acquisition, and a methodological perspective.

The LMMs further revealed a significant effect of the exposure/experience index on all language measures and the composite language index, whereas the SES index did not contribute significantly to any of the models. These findings strongly support input-based accounts of child SLA (Krashen, 1985; Ellis, 2008; Unsworth, 2016). Together with the significant improvements in the L2 proficiency over time, the current results further support the positive effects of cumulative exposure to and experience with the target L2 (Paradis, 2011, 2019).

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Metalinguistic awareness and L2 English proficiency in Norwegian adolescents

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The present study explored the metalinguistic awareness (MLA) of adolescents (age 15-17) in Norway and its relationship to proficiency in English as a second language (L2). MLA may be defined as the ability to focus attention on the form rather than the meaning of language (Simard & Gutiérrez, 2018), and may range from intuitions about and manipulations of linguistic form to verbalization of metalinguistic knowledge. Extant literature has indicated that MLA is positively tied to L2 proficiency in children (Haugen, 2025), young adolescents (Walla, 2024) and adults (Roehr, 2008). The present study investigated whether this was also the case for older Norwegian adolescents. Their L2 English acquisition may be described as instructed, but also input-rich, as many Norwegian adolescents have a high level of out-of-school exposure to English (Medietilsynet, 2024). Furthermore, explicit grammar teaching has been found to be scarce and unsystematic in their L1 and L2 classrooms (Askland, 2020; Brøseth et al., 2020), and their resulting explicit grammar competence appears to be low (Brøseth & Nygård, 2023). Within this context, the present study investigated:

1. What is the level of MLA of pupils in the first year of Norwegian upper secondary school (age 15-17)?
2. To what extent and how is MLA related to L2 proficiency in this population?

Participants (n = 241) were tested using multiple metalinguistic tasks based on existing task formats: morphological manipulation of nonwords using inflection (Berko, 1958) and derivation (Wu & Juffs, 2022), word function matching (inspired by MLAT IV, Roehr, 2008), knowledge of metalinguistic terminology (e.g., Alderson et al., 1997), and error explanation (e.g., Roehr, 2008). All tasks included both L1 and L2 items. L2 proficiency was measured with a timed acceptability judgement task and a yes/no vocabulary task (LVST, Masrai, 2022).

All metalinguistic tasks showed relatively high individual variation in performance. Mean accuracies ranged from highest on the morphological manipulation tasks (74-88%) to more moderate on the metalanguage and error explanation tasks, which required more explicit metalinguistic knowledge (47-54%). Some comparisons to previous studies may be made within the Norwegian context. Average ability to verbalise one's metalinguistic knowledge appears to be higher in the present sample than for Walla's (2024) younger participants, which indicates an expected development with age. The moderate and narrow understanding of metalinguistic terminology in the present sample mirrors what was found by Brøset and Nygård (2023).

Preliminary regression analyses indicate that there is a weak positive relationship between MLA and L2 proficiency. Additionally, MLA appears to be more strongly related to L2 proficiency than out-of-school use of English, supporting the argument that explicit grammar still has an important role in the language classroom even in input-rich L2 learning environments.

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Abstract

Multilingualism and target-like use of the present progressive: Implications for language education

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Research on multilingual language acquisition has been associated with increased linguistic awareness and an enhanced ability to reflect on and compare linguistic structures (Jessner, 2006). This study addresses this by investigating whether multilingual learners differ from monolingual and bilingual learners in their target-like use of the English present progressive. It asks: **RQ1:** Do monolingual, bilingual and multilingual learners differ in their target-like use of the English progressive? **RQ2:** What are the potential implications of these findings for language teaching in multilingual classrooms? Using learner-corpus data from the ICCI, ICLE, SWIKO and MILE corpora, the study examines target-like and non-target-like progressive productions among German learners across different proficiency levels.

The logistic regression results show that multilingual learners had significantly higher odds of target-like progressive use than monolingual learners ($OR = 1.36$, $p = .036$), after controlling for other predictors. Model-based predictions indicate approximately 58% target-like use among multilingual learners, compared with 50% among monolingual learners and 57% among bilingual learners. The difference was significant only between multilingual and monolingual learners. These findings suggest that multilingual experience may be associated with more target-like grammatical form-function mappings, although no causal relationship can be established.

Furthermore, these preliminary findings also speak to Pedagogical Linguistics (Trotzke & Rankin, 2020; Trotzke, 2026) by highlighting the linguistic and metalinguistic resources multilingual learners bring to language and teacher education. Rather than viewing multilingualism mainly as a potential difficulty, the results suggest that these resources may also support language teaching in today's multilingual classrooms.

Keywords: multilingualism, mixed-effects logistic regression, third language acquisition, present progressive, pedagogical linguistics

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Can MADE Generate Actionable Positive Beliefs about Multilingualism in the Classroom? A Case Study of In-Service and Pre-Service Teachers in Continuing Professional Development and Primary Teacher Education

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Multilingualism is often treated as a hindrance rather than a resource in mainstream education (Conteh & Meier, 2014), while the idea of a monolingual habitus (Gogolin, 1994) remains influential. At the same time, selected studies indicate that teachers' attitudes and self-efficacy are key factors shaping actual teaching practices (Schwab & Alnahdi, 2020). Research addressing multilingualism in instructional contexts, however, points to a discrepancy between teachers' generally positive beliefs about multilingualism and their perceived efficacy in implementing inclusive multilingual classroom practices (Arocena et al., 2015; Basturkmen, 2012; Haukås, 2016). For example, research on primary-school teachers in Germany with a non-German first language has shown that they rarely employ their non-German L1 in teaching arrangements (around 30%) and may even insist on German as the only language of instruction (Georgi, 2011). There is therefore a growing need for teacher education and continuing professional development programmes that strengthen both pre-service and in-service teachers' competencies in dealing with multilingualism.

The goal of the current study is to investigate whether the Multilingual Approach to Diversity in Education (MADE; Krulatz & Christison, 2023), as a pedagogical framework, provides the necessary affordances to shape teachers' beliefs regarding multilingualism and promote multilingual practices in the classroom. We report a case study of the implementation of a MADE-inspired module with both in-service and pre-service teachers in two teacher education contexts: a continuing professional development programme at the Centre for Teacher Training of Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg and the Bachelor's programme in Primary Education (Lehramt Grundschule) at BTU Cottbus-Senftenberg.

The continuing professional development programme at Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg is designed to provide in-service teachers who lack sufficient formal pedagogical training with subject and pedagogical content knowledge, including current issues in German linguistics, as well as theoretical foundations in education and psychology. At BTU Cottbus-Senftenberg, the module was implemented with pre-service primary-school teachers as part of their university teacher education. The study included 18 in-service teachers of German and at Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg, as well as 20 pre-service primary-school teachers enrolled in the Lehramt Grundschule programme at BTU Cottbus-Senftenberg.

The training combined on-site sessions with asynchronous assignments and project-based work. Participants were required to develop and present projects that translated MADE principles into concrete pedagogical practice. These projects included, for example, the design of tasks, teaching materials, and classroom activities for multilingual learning environments. In this way, the intervention addressed not only participants' conceptual understanding of multilingualism but also their ability to operationalise multilingual approaches in instructional design. Participants' beliefs about multilingualism were surveyed in a pre-/post-design using a questionnaire adapted from Gorter and Arocena (2020). The questionnaire contained Likert-type statements addressing multilingualism and translanguaging, the use of multiple languages in the classroom, language separation, and monolingual norms, as well as several open-ended questions. The participants' project outputs and lesson designs provided an additional source for examining how theoretical principles were translated into concrete classroom practices.

In this contribution, I focus on the development of in-service and pre-service teachers' beliefs through participation in a MADE-inspired training module and on the extent to which these beliefs become actionable pedagogical beliefs. I compare patterns across the in-service and pre-service teacher groups in order to explore whether professional experience and teacher education context are associated with different responses to the intervention. In addition, I examine participants' project work as evidence of their ability to translate positive attitudes towards multilingualism into concrete instructional practices. Finally, I relate the educational gains observed in the MADE-inspired module to those reported for other multilingual teacher-training programmes (cf. Gorter & Arocena, 2020).

Keywords: Multilingualism, Teachers' Beliefs, MADE, Agency, Multilingual Turn

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From Linguistic Knowledge to Diagnostic Competence: Probing Theories of Orthographic Development into Pre-Service Teachers

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Research on (multilingual) language acquisition has demonstrated the importance of understanding learners' developing linguistic systems, including the role of crosslinguistic influence and differences between L2 and L_n acquisition (Angelovska & Hahn, 2023; Cabrelli et al., 2023). Yet, despite the increasing emphasis on the multilingual turn and metalinguistic awareness in language education, studies suggest that in- and pre-service teachers often possess limited knowledge of language structure (Van Rijt et al., 2019) and have difficulties translating linguistic knowledge into pedagogically relevant decisions (Borg, 2005; Brøseth & Nygård, 2023). The crucial question is therefore not only whether and how much teachers know about language and linguistic traditions, but whether they can use linguistic knowledge diagnostically to interpret learner linguistic development and determine appropriate support.

This present contribution examines this question through the lens of orthographic development in emergent L2 literacy. It reports on an investigation of the diagnostic competence of pre-service teachers of German (N = 25) who were asked to analyse seven spelling inventories (Do Manh et al., 2021) produced by emergent reader-spellers in L2 German. Rather than simply identifying correct and incorrect spellings, participants had to determine where learners were situated in their orthographic development, whether they required additional support, and which underlying components of literacy (Kim, 2020) constituted the most important targets for intervention.

Following the diagnostic task, participants completed a questionnaire probing their conceptions of orthographic development. The questionnaire presented multiple interpretations of learner spellings and required participants to select the diagnostic approach that best represented their assessment. The alternatives systematically varied in their underlying assumptions and ranged from punctual, form-focused explanations to developmental (Bear et al., 2020), contrastive (Edeleva, accepted for a review), and system-oriented accounts (Edeleva, in prep.). This design makes it possible to investigate the relationship between pre-service teachers' explicit conceptions of orthographic development and their actual diagnostic decisions.

The contribution asks: **(1)** What kinds of linguistic knowledge do in-service teachers draw on when diagnosing L2 orthographic development? **(2)** To what extent do their diagnostic decisions reflect developmental, crosslinguistic, or system-oriented perspectives? **(3)** Is teachers' explicit metalinguistic knowledge reflected in their ability to identify appropriate areas of learner support? and **(4)** What does this reveal about the role of formal and linguistic knowledge in teacher education?

Results will be available by the conference dates. The findings will contribute to current discussions of how linguistic research can inform teacher education and classroom practice, while also highlighting potential mismatches between teachers' metalinguistic knowledge and their diagnostic competence. More broadly, the study argues that integrating linguistics into teacher education should not be limited to transmitting terminology or descriptive knowledge. Instead, linguistic concepts need to be developed as diagnostic resources that enable teachers to interpret learner language development systematically and make theoretically informed decisions about instruction.

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Assessing Input with CARE in L2 Classroom

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Researchers in second language acquisition (SLA) broadly agree that input varies in its acquisitional value, shaped by properties such as frequency, salience, and comprehensibility (Krashen, 1980; Schmidt, 1990; Ellis & Collins, 2009; Han, 2013). Because instruction remains central to how most L2 learners worldwide acquire language, instructional input, including textbooks, should be evaluated using SLA research-informed guidelines (Cook, 1998). While general guidelines for materials design exist, a systematic, theory-driven, and practical framework for evaluating textbook input specifically has yet to be developed. A recent systematic review (Li et al., 2025) of three decades of ELT textbook evaluation research found that the field relies heavily on checklists and surveys, and remains largely descriptive, with limited integration of SLA theory into evaluation practice.

To address this gap, the authors propose an evaluative framework named CARE (comprehensibility, authenticity, robustness, and external benchmark alignment), which is target-language-neutral. Each dimension rests on empirically researched theoretical constructs. Comprehensibility operationalizes the proportion of unfamiliar words within a text. Authenticity comprises four criteria, rating Scenario relevance, Speaker role alignment, Pragmatic appropriateness and Discourse-level alignment respectively. Robustness also includes criteria mapped onto well-researched SLA constructs: frequency, variability, and salience. External benchmark alignment cross-references instructional input against proficiency-anchored, level-appropriate vocabulary lists, essentially using the vocabulary lists as proxy of acquisitional efficiency.

A preliminary validation study examined the framework's construct validity by analyzing input from three published beginner-level Chinese textbooks (hereafter referred to as AC, IC and EMC) across all four CARE dimensions, while seven Chinese language instructors each evaluated the same input qualitatively, independent of the framework. The CARE analysis shows that: AC contains the largest percentage of unknown words in one single lesson, while EMC had the smallest portion of new words; both IC and EMC were rated more authentic than AC, but each has its own strengths and weaknesses. EMC is more robust than IC and AC in terms of the frequency, variability and salience of the target structure le, which is notoriously challenging for L2 Chinese learners; EMC shows the closest vocabulary alignment with New HSK Levels 1–3.

Six experienced Chinese language instructors were given prompts to provide qualitative evaluation of the same textbook chapters. They were first asked to rank the textbooks' holistically, and then asked to provide justifications. Three themes emerged from the qualitative data: vocabulary, grammar and authenticity. Convergence was strong between the results of CARE analysis and domain experts' judgement, providing initial evidence for the framework's applicability. The most divergent results concentrated on the dimension of authenticity. While the framework's authenticity analysis points to a clear winner (EMC), teachers disagreed with each other about which textbook provides the most authentic input. A close examination revealed that teachers probably held fundamentally different, implicit definitions of "authenticity", underscoring the need for explicit operationalization. Without a shared definition, practitioners appear to default to whichever aspect of authenticity their training has made most salient. CARE's four authenticity criteria are designed to disaggregate these competing definitions,

letting evaluators assess each separately rather than collapsing them into one impressionistic judgment. It should be noted that further validation studies are needed across different proficiency levels and target languages, in order to determine the CARE framework's generalizability to a broader context.

The value of a multidimensional profile is first of all diagnostic. No textbook is perfect, and CARE is not designed to identify one. Rather, it makes explicit where a given textbook's input is strong and where it is weak, which in turn tells instructors what they need to supplement. Rather than concluding that a textbook is simply "good" or "poor," CARE turns evaluation into a set of targeted, actionable observations. For example, while IC ranked well overall, its profile reveals that the quantity of textbook input and the size of the vocabulary presented are insufficient, meaning instructors adopting IC would need to supplement substantial material to build adequate exposure. EMC's input was strong based on CARE analysis, but could use input enhancement techniques to make the target structure more salient. AC, by contrast, performed poorly across all four dimensions, and its weaknesses are correspondingly too pervasive to warrant adoption. In each case, the framework does not simply rank the textbook but specifies the nature of its shortcomings and, by extension, the instructional response required.

Beyond informing adoption decisions, CARE is equally suited to the creation of new instructional materials. Each dimension corresponds to a property of input that a materials developer can deliberately manipulate: the density and recycling of new vocabulary, the correspondence between scenarios and learner needs, the frequency, variability, and salience of target structures, and alignment with external benchmarks. A developer working with these criteria in mind from the outset can control input quality pre-emptively, rather than discovering shortcomings only after the fact.

While CARE was originally developed and validated for textbook input, its underlying constructs are not tied to any particular mode of text production. Teachers now routinely generate or source materials from large language models as generative AI tools become increasingly accessible, usually without systematic means of evaluating material quality before classroom use. This gap has been noted in a recent systematic review, which explicitly identified AI-generated materials as an area future evaluative research needs to address (Li et al., 2025). CARE is well positioned to fill this gap. AI can produce text that is grammatically well-formed but pragmatically generic or misaligned with target communicative norms — precisely what the authenticity criteria are designed to detect. Similarly, the robustness criteria's attention to frequency, variability, and salience give teachers concrete tools for manipulating AI-generated input to support form-meaning mapping. Comprehensibility and external benchmark alignment are comparably straightforward to control: teachers can prompt a model to constrain the density of new vocabulary or to draw words from a specified proficiency band.

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Bridging Linguistics and Language Didactics in Spanish Teacher Education: The *SpLinDid* Way

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The research project presented here takes as its point of departure the observation that university courses in subject-specific academic content and language didactics are often taught without explicit connections between them, leading students to perceive them as separate areas of study. An initial needs analysis based on interviews with students of Spanish and teachers confirmed this perception. Students tended to regard linguistic content as “good to know” rather than as a necessary resource for their future teaching practice. At the same time, they indicated that linguistic content would become more appealing if its relevance to classroom practice were made more explicit. Among qualified teachers, the perceived relevance of linguistic content was closely related to their own academic specialization: teachers with a stronger background in linguistics rated its usefulness for their professional practice considerably higher than teachers whose studies had focused on other academic areas.

The findings of the needs analysis demonstrate that there is a need not only for closer integration of subject-specific academic and language-didactic training, but also for greater awareness of how linguistic knowledge can contribute to the analysis and design of classroom practice. Against this background, the project is situated within the field of *Pedagogical Linguistics*, which investigates how insights from linguistics can be made relevant to language teaching and teacher education (cf. Trotzke 2023: e153). At the same time, the project draws on the concept of *Pedagogical Content Knowledge*, which describes the development of professional knowledge through the integration of subject-matter and pedagogical knowledge (cf. Shulman 1986: 9) and, in the context of language teaching, places particular emphasis on the pedagogical transformation of linguistic knowledge (cf. Diaz Maggioli 2026: 289). Building on these approaches, the project aims to strengthen the connection between Spanish linguistics and language didactics by enabling prospective teachers of Spanish to use their linguistic knowledge to analyze, explain, and anticipate authentic classroom situations. Rather than integrating individual linguistic topics into teaching on an occasional basis, the project seeks to make knowledge acquired across the core areas of linguistics continuously available as a foundation for pedagogical decision-making. To this end, digital teaching and learning modules are being developed for integration into introductory university courses in language didactics and Spanish linguistics. The six modules cover phonetics, morphosyntax, lexis, pragmatics, text and discourse, and language variation. Drawing on problem-based learning, each module is structured around examples reflecting typical situations in the Spanish language classroom (cf. Müller Werder 2013: 50f.). The learning process follows three main steps: students first identify and analyze a linguistic problem, then acquire the relevant linguistic knowledge and methods needed to address it, and finally apply this knowledge to develop a solution to the problem. Video lectures delivered by national and international experts, academic readings, and the application of linguistic methods provide the necessary input, while interactive and creative activities support students in transferring this knowledge to the problem at hand.

The conference presentation will illustrate how this approach is operationalized in an initial version of the lexis module, since lexical knowledge is central to a wide range of classroom

situations requiring professional decision-making. It will show how students move from identifying a lexical problem in a classroom-related example, via the acquisition and application of relevant concepts and corpus-based methods, to formulating a pedagogically informed solution. In this process, the module focuses on conceptions of the mental lexicon, corpus-based analyses of collocations using the Spanish corpus *CORPES XXI*, as well as polysemous, homonymous, metaphorical, and metonymic meanings in reading comprehension (cf. Kreyer 2023: 121/ cf. Real Academia Española/ Ibarretxe-Antuñano 2019: 332/ Blank 2001: 43f., 130–133). These aspects serve to demonstrate how linguistic concepts can be made applicable to the analysis and treatment of authentic classroom problems and how this approach may, at the same time, increase students’ interest in linguistic content. Based on this example, the presentation will conclude by reflecting on the extent to which problem-based digital teaching and learning modules can contribute to the sustainable integration of linguistic knowledge into the professional competence of prospective teachers of Spanish and thereby contribute to university-based teacher education.

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